

Becoming an effective leader within the practice

The aim of this article by **LAURA HORTON** is to provide expert advice on leadership within the practice, which will help you to manage your dental practice more successfully.

I love this quote from Stephen Covey, which perfectly explains the difference between leadership and management perfectly: 'Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning up against the right wall'.

Management is reactive and non-emotional. The manager must respond to a situation to provide order and consistency. On the other hand, leaders are more emotionally involved and will create or control a situation, leadership is about creating change. Both roles are important for success, but it is vital to understand the difference between the two. This article will focus on how to be an effective leader within your practice.

Types of leadership

There are different types of leadership – assigned and emergent. An assigned leader is someone who has a designated role, they may be

Developing your time management

As we have already highlighted, there is plenty to do within a dental practice. Time management is an essential skill for business leaders to master and doing so effectively will allow you to complete all necessary tasks and finish work at a decent hour. Sound good? Here are some tips on how to do it...

The Eisenhower Box or Time Management Matrix is

a great method for organising your tasks into urgent and not urgent categories, which allows you and then arrange them by importance. I find this useful for preventing the myriad of not important and not urgent tasks – such as sorting through junk mail or checking social media – from taking over my day and wasting time. Focus your energy on the most important task of the day first and everything else will then fall into place.

the practice owner, practice manager, or team leader but they may not always be the 'leader' in every situation.

An emergent leader is someone whose job role does not assign them as a leader, but they naturally emerge as such over time due to interaction and communication within the business.

Both types of leaders are important within a business, it is vital to ensure that assigned leaders are fully supported in their roles and it is just as crucial to look

within the team as to who is demonstrating natural leadership qualities that can be valuable to the business.

An important facet of time management is understanding that you can't do everything yourself. You have a team within your dental practice and each member has a different skillset that can be effectively used to enhance your business. Everyone has something to offer. Effective delegation will prevent you from carrying out every task within the dental practice yourself and it will also ensure your team feels valued and part of the bigger picture. It helps to get everyone on board with working towards a shared goal and vision, and allows you to focus on leading rather than doing.

Start by highlighting the tasks that take up the majority of your time – this is probably the perfect area for delegation. The second step is to discuss with individual team members whether they have the capacity within





their role to take on extra responsibilities and whether this is something that they are interested in. Resist the urge to immediately hand over projects and throw your staff in at the deep end, successful leadership requires effective mentoring and a good handover to ensure things continue to run smoothly. Follow up on tasks regularly enough to ensure things are being done effectively, without being controlling or overbearing. Your team should know that they can ask for support when they need it and that you trust them to carry out the delegated task.

Communicating to motivate and inspire

Managers frequently tell me that they have problems when it comes to motivating their staff. It's tempting to blame the employees, however, it's far more productive to look at it from the other angle. It's up to us as managers and leaders to find the right way to motivate our staff and inspire them so they can reach their potential, and in turn help our businesses to do the same.

Each person we deal with will respond better to certain kinds of communication

than others – so it is up to the communicator to find the best way for each individual. That flexibility and adaptability can turn a good communicator into a great one.

What sets the best communicators apart is the way they deal with the responses to their communication. They understand that others will have views which aren't necessarily the same as their own, but they are willing to listen to them and take different views on board. It's also important that communicators realise that they can be wrong, and that they can admit that to people.

If you find your message isn't getting through, take a moment to stop and think about why that might be. Listen to what your employees are saying to you – and what they're not saying – and think about how to bridge the gap between your views and theirs. Then, try a different approach.

Secondly, remember that listening is a hugely important part of communication. Many leaders make the mistake of thinking that communicating is all about saying things – but it's just as much about

listening to those you are communicating with. A conversation is, by definition, a two-way interaction.

There are several key elements to being a good listener:

- Think about using open body language, including eye contact and a positive posture, such as not crossing your arms
- Show that they have your full attention. Don't fidget with your pen, stare out of the window or check your phone
- Don't interrupt, or try to finish people's sentences
- However, don't stay silent – it can be very off-putting to the speaker! Instead, make positive, encouraging noises, such as 'really?' and 'yes', and nod your head
- Finally, ensure you have taken in what they said and take a moment to consider your response before speaking. There's nothing more frustrating than finding your manager doesn't respond to what you've said, but instead talks about something completely different – it gives the impression that he or she hasn't been listening at all. ■

RECOMMENDED

CPD4 DCPs

Volume 12



LAURA HORTON

Guidance to help support dental professionals in becoming inspiring leaders.

MODULE 10

Becoming an effective leader within the practice

Aims and objectives:

- Understand the difference between management and leadership
- Understand the different types of leadership
- Understand how to effectively develop time management
- Understand how to communicate with the team to motivate and inspire them

GDC development outcome: B

Continuing Professional Development

MODULE 10

Becoming an effective leader within the practice

Module 10: Becoming an effective leader within the practice

Complete answers on the questionnaire provided in Section Four

1. Which one does Laura define as a type of leader?
2. Which of the following is a great method of time management?
3. Who said: 'Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning up against the right wall'?
4. Which areas are best for delegation?
5. How should you decide who to delegate to?
6. Which of the following is not a key element of being a good listener?



LAURA HORTON

Laura worked has worked in Dentistry for 21 years and has an unrivalled passion and enthusiasm for treatment coordination, business and team development. Laura is a master at communicating with patients and provides training to dentists based on her grassroots knowledge and experience. Horton Consulting works with dental practices to motivate and inspire the leaders and the team to deliver the vision of the owner(s) in a patient centred business.